



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

July 16, 2004

NEW COMMANDER TAKES REINS OF V CORPS HEADQUARTERS BATTALION

By Spc. Rebecca Burt
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HEIDELBERG, Germany – V Corps' Special Troops Battalion welcomed a new leader when Lt. Col. William Dodge passed the battalion's colors to incoming commander Lt. Col. Mark Gorton during a change of command ceremony at Campbell Barracks in Heidelberg, Germany July 16.

The battalion encompasses the corps' headquarters and command staff and the Soldiers who staff and support it.

Gorton faces the challenge of filling an exemplary leader's shoes, as Dodge led STB smoothly through its yearlong deployment in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom, for which the unit earned the Army's Meritorious Unit Citation, said Brig. Gen. Daniel Keefe, V Corps chief of staff.

"(Dodge) ensured that the individual soldiers standing here today, along with the colonels and generals in the audience, received



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Lt. Col. Mark J. Gorton, the incoming commander of V Corps' Special Troops Battalion, expresses his hopes for the future of STB during the ceremony in which he accepted the battalion command, at Campbell Barracks in Heidelberg, Germany July 16.

the individual training necessary to fight in combat, so that when our president called last March for us to remove Saddam Hussein's regime and liberate the Iraqi people, this headquarters and this battalion answered the bell.

"On top of that, you and the STB built Camp Victory [in Baghdad] into one of the finest forward deployed bases in the Army," said Keefe.

"(Dodge) and the soldiers of this battalion had performed magnificently for the past two years. You demonstrated selfless service; courage in facing the unknown; an unwavering commitment to the nation and to each other, and a spirit that made the whole world sit up and take notice," the general continued. "To have built and led the team that you did is something for you and your entire chain of command to be proud of. No one could have done it better."

Keefe also said he expected the excellence of the unit to continue, and that he has full confidence in Gorton.

"(Gorton) comes to us from the Special Forces with a wealth of experience, wisdom and skills to take this battalion to a new and higher level," Keefe said. "We have much work ahead of us, but it will be a great ride. The [V Corps] command group and the entire corps staff look forward to working with you."

Gorton said he is ready to step up to the plate and lead the STB through the next few years. "I look forward to working with all of you and facing the challenges ahead of us together," he said.

Gorton has served in a variety of positions since receiving his commission in 1985, including rifle platoon leader, battalion scout platoon leader, rifle company executive officer and brigade air operations officer with the 1st Battalion (Airborne), 508th Parachute Infantry in the Republic of Panama, and many positions within the 7th Special Forces Group. While serving in the 7th SF, Gorton conducted operations throughout Central and South America while performing the duties as operations officer at Joint Task Force Bravo; SCUBA detachment commander with the 1st Battalion; as assistant operations officer at the group's headquarters; assault detachment commander with the 3rd Battalion in the Republic of Panama; as the group's senior U.S. observer for Operation Safe Border; as commander of the Group Support Company and as commander of its Company A, 2nd Battalion. The colonel has spent the past 24 months at MacDill Air Force Base, Fla., where he was assigned to the United States Special Operations Command as the chief of the special programs branch.

Gorton has a master's degree in military operation art and science from the Air Command and Staff College at Maxwell Air Force Base, Ala., and a master's from Auburn University.

His awards and decorations include the Defense Meritorious Service Medal; the Army Meritorious Service Medal with three oak leaf clusters; the Joint Service Commendation Medal with one oak leaf cluster; the Army Commendation Medal; the Army Achievement Medal with two oak leaf clusters; the Star of Ecuador, and the General Jose Maria Cordoba Medal of Columbia. He has also earned the Expert Infantryman's Badge; the Combat Infantryman's Badge; the Master Parachutist Badge; the Pathfinder Badge; the SCUBA Badge; the Special Forces Tab and the Ranger Tab.

